SEQUOYA REVIEW

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THE LITERARY MAGAZINE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT CHATTANOOGA

STAFF

CONTENTS

Vol.5 1980 No.2

FOR QUINN *

1.
About a million hubcaps
strung together, hung like
red-neck drapery all around
the outside of the
shed beside the dump-
silver circle windchimes
gonging by the highway.

2.
"Driving to Hawaii,"
we told the stranger at the
worm and general store, except we
drawled, "Hi-wy-ya, Hi-wy-ya."
In the rain the skinny
antique gas pump rusted
some more while in a tiny,
fly-specked window on its side
two balls
twiddled, bobbed, and gyred
like attracted molecules
just introduced.

3.
Zero to zero at
the abandoned ballpark,
the roofless concession-stand
concedes to the whistling grass
that's stealing home and diamond.
Desolate. Sand nettles lay waiting,
forever-open gloves in the outfield.
At twilight,
the orbs of cola signs
drift like lost planets.

Jeanne Perry * **PRIZE WINNER**

THE FOOT

Three-pronged, fleshy fork
I found, unhandled
in the stucco house's
ragged shadow slanting on
the August gangling
gasping grass-just a
severed chicken foot,
impossible red
cartoon slingshot;
no de-sodding chicken scratch,
no ginger-step, no swipe of air.

I stared at it, trees
shrugged and stooped, but
vines were giving up
their roots, and strangling
bugs till spotted juice
dripped to a still of hissing green.
I was a child-to disconnect
in afternoon a pulsing foot
from chickens stabbing at the
lawn did not occur.

I saw three bulbous toes, a
spur-a total foot. My
eyes whirled up with giddiness,
concluded just what foot it was:
Between the emerald boa tufts
of newer trees and the blocky roof,
through the primal, tremulous air,
with lizard beak and leather wings
a crippled pterodactyl sailed.

Happily, I smiled and ran,
Left the foot just laying there,
and chased the chickens off the grass.

Jeanne Perry

SUPERSTITION

"You can tell if a man is good enough
not by the way he prays
but by the shape of his foot;
the heartless limb sometimes lean
or short and muscular, the last toe
pointing outward into a chicken claw
or parrot's beak."
You'll need to know this
my grandmother advised over the pot
of boiling chickens. Three chicken
feet under the front porch,
the beaks buried under the furthest tree.
It made me sick.
They never tried to bleed
my limbs, thank god
and though we got science in our family
that never cured my aunty nye like
the pow-wow did, bowls of water,
candles and hands circling over her bed.
They bled the evil spirit.
And at sunday dinner mother told
me not to worry that no man
or grandmother would fool with my spirit
that the x scar on my right wrist meant
nothing, nothing, nor the heart-shaped
mark on the back of my thigh
identical to my grandmother's.
As she spoke, salt from her hand
fell upon us, she had accidentally
spilled it and daddy handed me
the bay leaf for good luck.

Elizabeth Thomas

MAN WITH AN ORCHARD AND HORSES

Why shouldn't horses
be like camels?

I have seen
pictures of them
pitched outside an
Arab tent
whose colors are like
the colors of the sun
when it plays on sand.

They carry all
they need in humps.
They sleep lying down.

If I need a charm to
get my work done,
I think of camels.

I look out among the trees and
see my camels there
asleep on their feet.
They are old. Their humps
are inverted
and press on their stomachs.

I have lived to
feed these horses.

I have lived to watch them
shift endlessly
on still legs
while the leaves turned
colors above them.

I have no tent,
no need for oases.

Here everything is trees dying
in the light that nursed them.

Michael Panori

A HOLIDAY RITUAL (PT.2)

We respect the dead because
we did not know them. We know little
of Uncle X, who died in the trenches
of syphillis. Or Cousin Y, who only sobered
when he heard the cannons cry.

All things are worshipped out of fear-
God, that he will not strike us dead,
the Dead, that they will not return
to claim us for their own. Or perhaps
because somewhere all those who do not breathe
are taking notes, waiting in silence to greet us
with the vengeance of a thousand years.
We place flowers on the graves,
wreaths of cautious garlic.
Memorial Day, 1979

Terry Fugate

SONG

Your prescence is
(If you would care to know)

As cool as rain
On a broken leaf,

Or falling snow.

Paul Ramsey

THE DUSTY WINDOW MYSTERY

She looked thru the old dusty window
straining to see around the sun's glare and her own reflection
at an old table and a cracked wooden floor
But her attention was being unconsciously aimed
at a door leading into silent shade

She went in, every step a creak
into a room inhabited with shadows
in one corner a chair, the other three vacant
Except in the middle of the room
on the floor lay five red roses dried with time
near a now faded stain
where she placed the sixth red rose.

Curt Childress

A PROBABLE COST OF PARADISE

"Who wants heaven?
rest homes like that
Scattered all through the galaxy."
Gary Snyder, "Hunting"

Suppose that it is less than anyone expects.
The wind spilling through the window,
emptying musings of death on closed books.
The chairs face paths where doves yawn in flight.

Endings are denied here, like coffins
which refuse to close. Cradled by perfect grass,
the pearls and jewels clutter the yard.

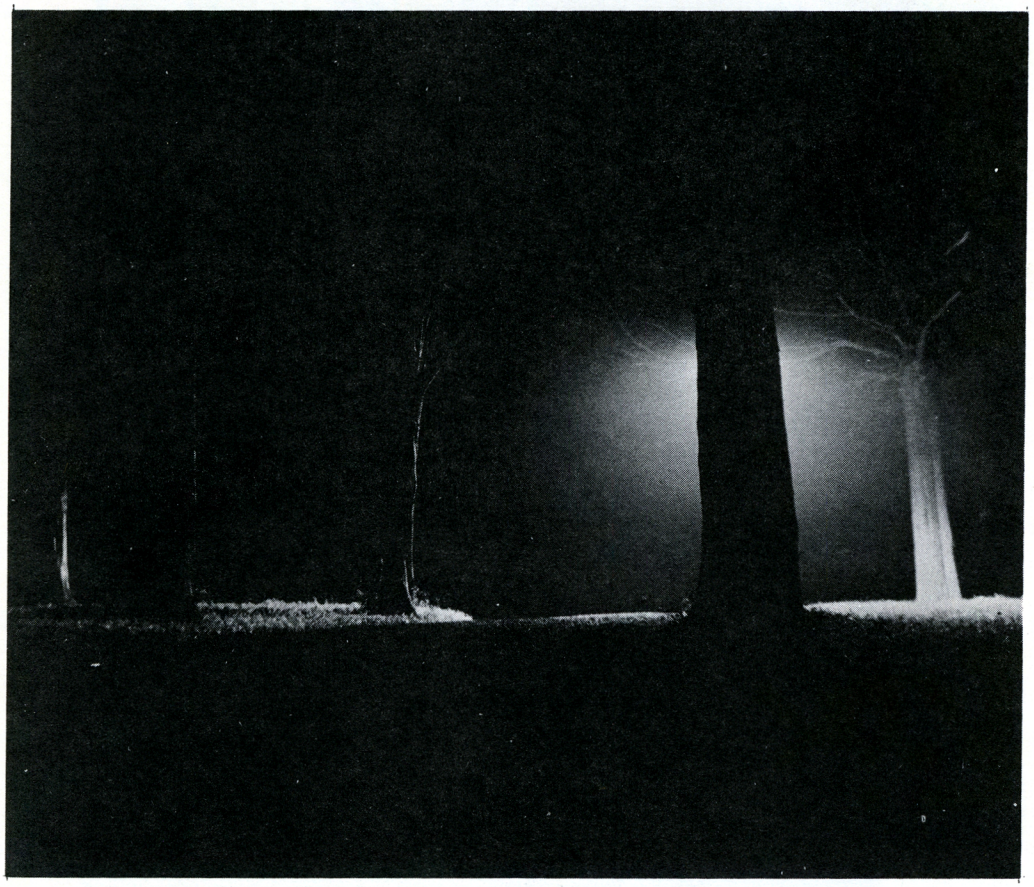
As for us, we awaken slowly, our wings affixed
like chains. We flutter like gnats, our songs
sterile but sure. No one wishes to breathe,

but this changes nothing. We are immortal.
The curse quickens our lips, breeding
a host of prayers for the impossible death.

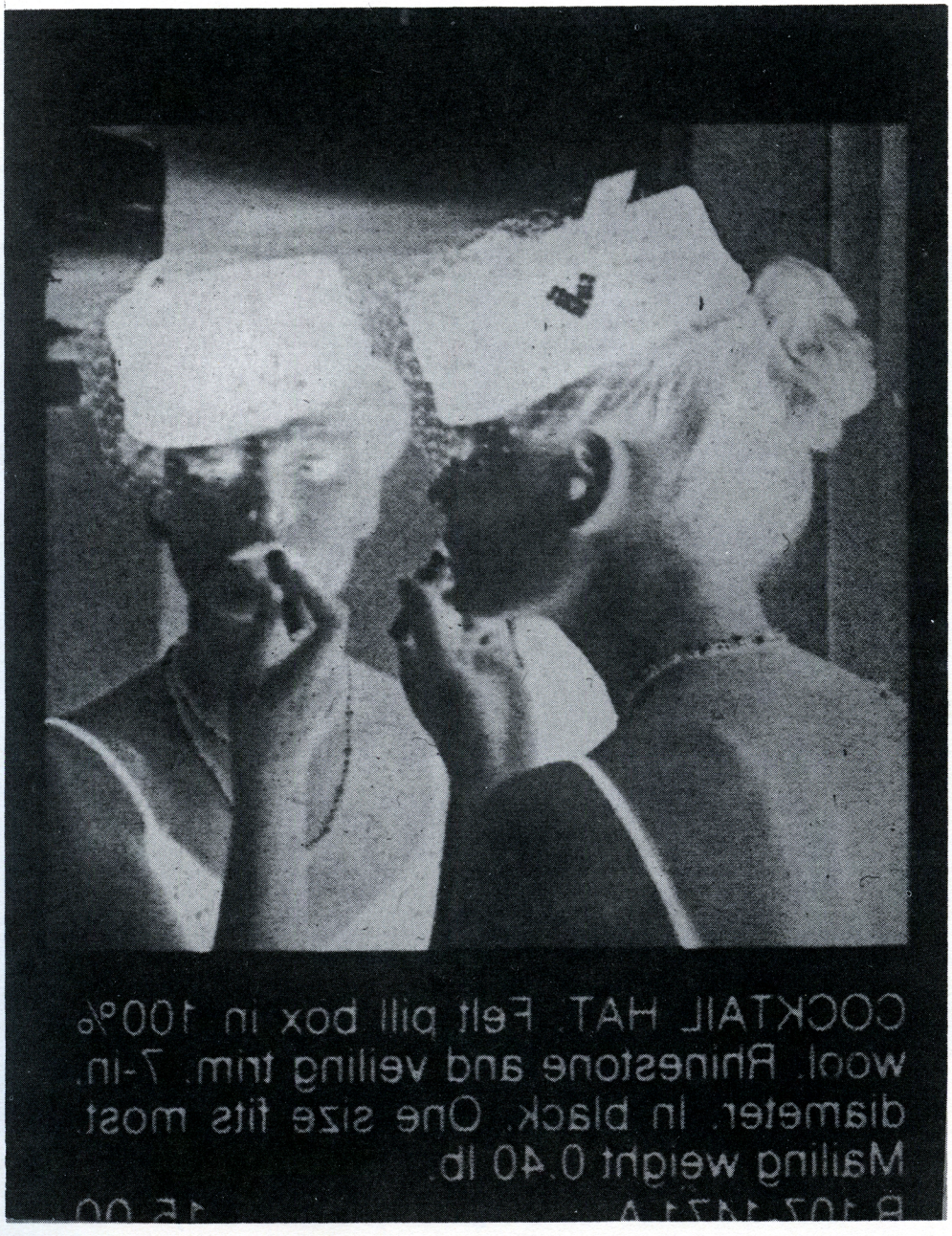
Terry Fugate

Wood and Nails **Tom Sewell**

Mardi Gras 1980 Bill Walker HONORABLE MENTION



Penumbra and Trees Stephen Killian

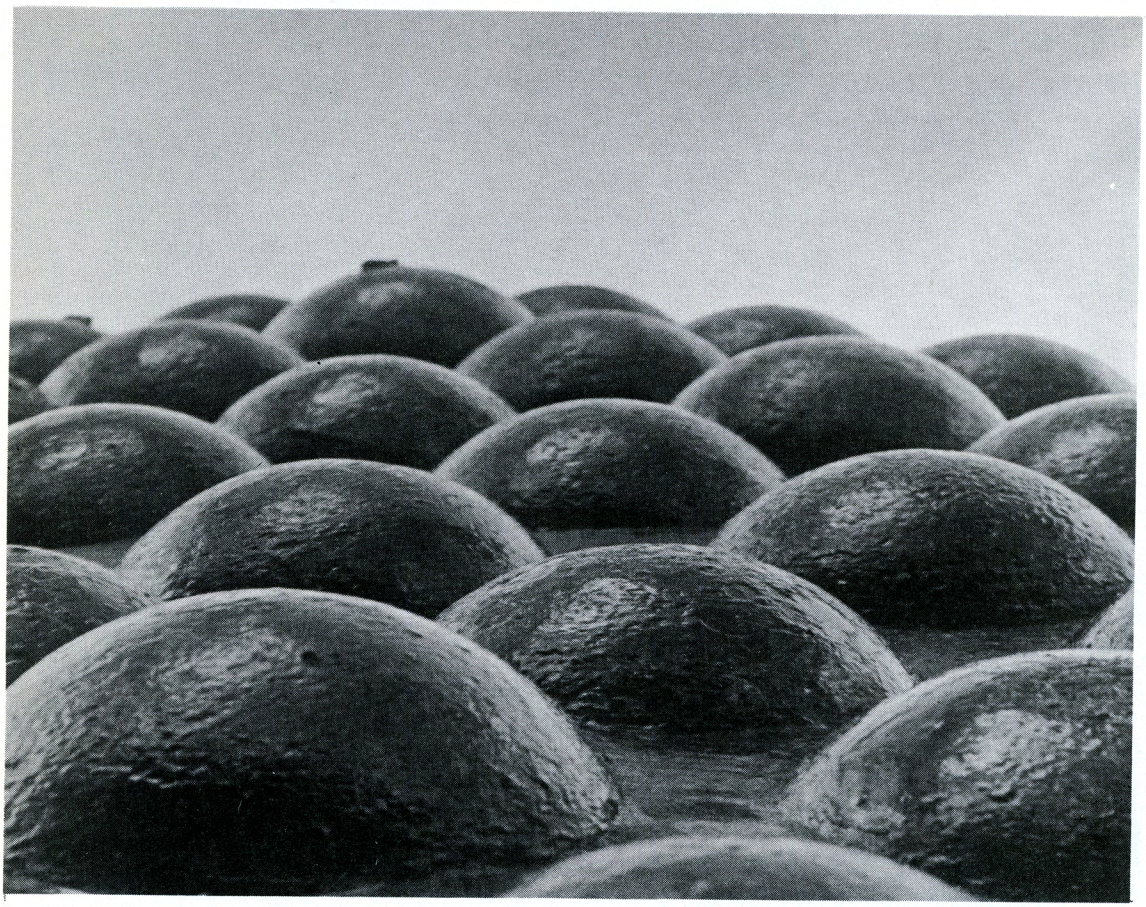


Kim Pack **Negative** *

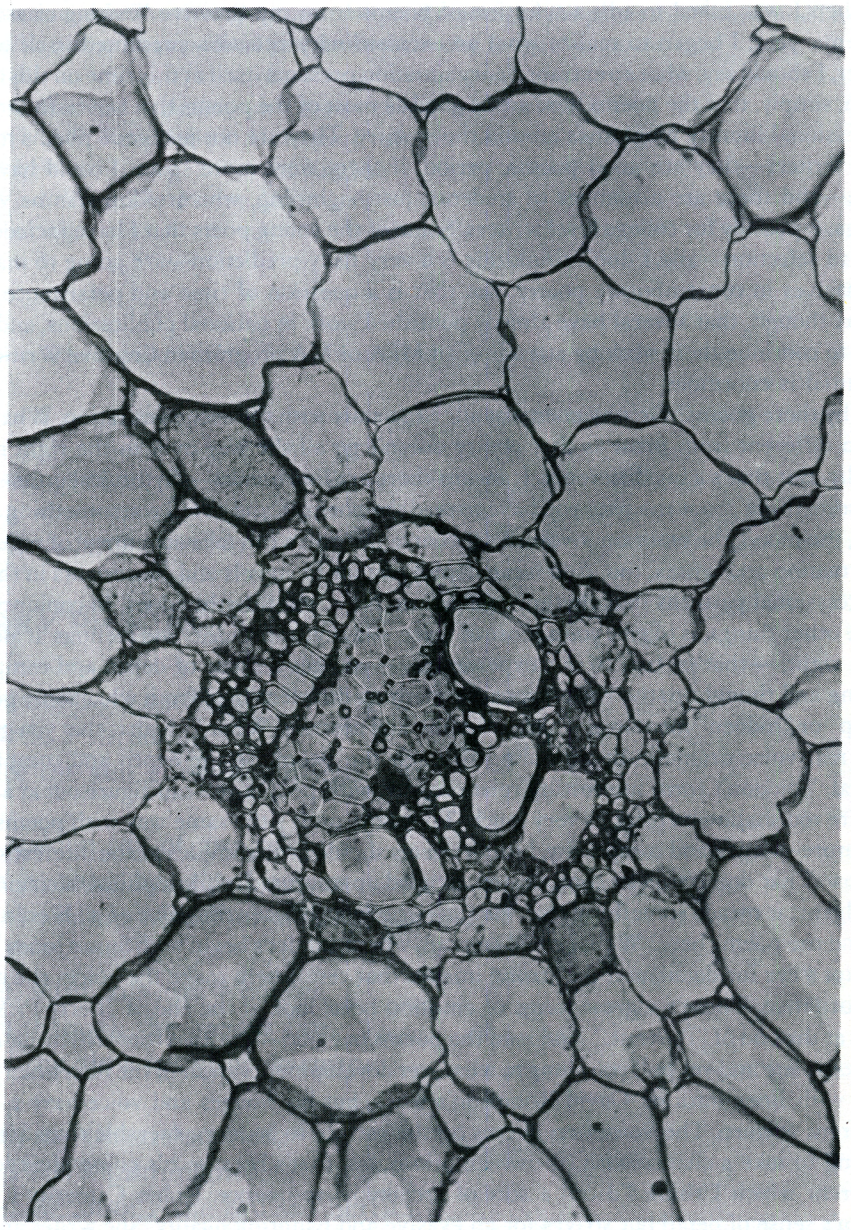
* **PRIZE WINNER**

Blue Cross Building Diane L. Moseley

Untitled Winter Scene Cathy Butcher



Cannonballs Bill McNeeley HONORABLE MENTION



Microscopic Trudy Stone

Whispers of the Hammer: Some Student Poems edited by Richard Jackson

When I was asked to edit a selection of poems from my Creative Writing classes of this academic year, I began to realize what an extraordinary situation presented itself to me. Or rather, I should say, what an extraordinary situation presents itself at this time on this campus. I mean, simply, that the poems here are as good as most of the poems that can be found in many professional literary magazines around the country. They are not just good poems for college level writers—they are good poems, period. If there were more space, I could have chosen more—and there are a number of students, just beginning, who are doing some very good things, especially for college level writers. Some of the young poets that I have included in this limited selection—and I don't think this is a very risky prediction—are going to make names for themselves in contemporary poetry. But that is a question of time and persistence. I should report though, that several have already published work in national publications, and a couple plan to continue their work by attending an MFA or MA program in Creative Writing. Their potential is enormous.

Why these poems? Or why poems at all? Let's start with the second question. What makes a poem different from prose is that poetry doesn't go all the way over to the right margin—usually. But that's a big difference. It means there are line breaks—rhythmical units—that tell you something about the pace you have to read the poem at, and so tell you something about the tone, the mood, the emotion involved. Of course the poem can take advantage of regular prose punctuation and syntax, too. And it can deploy sounds of vowels and consonants in the regular or occassional patterns that rhythm establishes. Now what rhythm does, in conjunction with these other things, is to give you a sense of voice, —a rhythm of ideas and feelings. If all of this is done right, —that is, true to our experiences, —you get a sense of depth and complexity of feeling and thought to the voice. I mean something different here from what some people call "deep" or "hidden" meanings which are static and abstract. What I mean is that you get a sense of a real voice dramatically unfolding through the poem. So the depth and complexity are crucial. You don't form interesting relationships with people you can figure out at a glance—they're too shallow to offer us very much. They bore us. It's the same way with poems, with all literature—depth and complexity. I think poems should be as complex as the interesting people I know. That doesn't mean complicated, tangled up, confused, philosophical, histrionic, self—indulgent; it means something real, human—the voice. That's the value of all literature really.

And the poems here? Well, I could start anywhere, but let's begin with Susan Jones. She has a painter's eye for detail, and the strong images that result help make the voices she uses more authoritative. There's a great range of emotion here; look at the end of "Berry Picking" and then at the end of "Portrait." And read the poems out loud—the lines form rhythmic units that are complete and yet pull you along to whatever developments await in the next lines. A similar skill with lines informs David Robinson's work, but his images and voice have a markedly different texture. The voice here seems on the surface to be less vulnerable than Susan's, less willing to take a chance with its own emotions, but that's because it's going after something different which I think I'd call a sort of archetypal resonance. Robin Cameron's voice has Susan's sense of detail but strives for an evasive and haunting quality. She writes an elliptical narrative; but it would be a mistake to call these poems narrative poems for they are concerned more with dialectics of voice than the surface of plot. Chris Wheeler's "The Room" works in a similar way; the voice here is quiet and the depth of its hurt can be measured by what it holds back. Kenneth Bivin's poem takes enormous chances, as all dramatic monologues about distant times do, but the understatement and control of voice here, the matter-of-fact way the character speaks, brings the poem off grandly. Note the casual but concerned way the phrase "for a second" falls near the end of the poem. Rachel Landrum's "Asylum" poem takes great chances, too, and skirts failure as the most interesting poems so often do; "326 West Allen's Lane" surprises with the way the speaker breaks in directly at the end, shifting the pace dramatically. What is surprising about Terry Fugate's poem is the eerie, surrealistic context it assumes, especially with the questions that end it. The impossibility of the statements is counterbalanced by the surety of voice and an interesting tension results which produces a kind of dream logic. The strength of David Ellison's poems is the rhetoric which can hold in a single thrust galaxies

and hats, geodes and foreskins. The remaining poems I've chosen, haiku-like poems, suceed on the descriptions said rightly, "justly," as a colleague of mine likes to say. But if you've read all this you've been missing out on some good reading in the pages that follow, and I'm not going to be so arrogant as to hold you from them any longer.

Richard Jackson
U.C. Foundation Assistant Professor
of English
Editor, *The Poetry Miscellany*

BERRY PICKING

Near our wire fence
I startle a shrike off
where the sun glints down into

this sudden sag of ground
with its thick breath of humus
like the damp mouth of a sleeping child.

Here, with this straw basket,
quiet through the beggar lice,
I feel the slow crawl of warmth.

Until, my fingers stained,
I find the hummingbird
hovering among the bruised berries,

perfect, climbing the lull,
riding the fence's tremor
where the shrike impaled him on a wire barb.

Susan Jones

* **PRIZE WINNER**

THE LUNA MOTH

Walking the road's shoulder
I pause beneath a stand
of hickories whose limbs splay
across the sky like the skeletal
ribcages of prehistoric birds.

On the road's center, beneath
a lamp, a Luna moth quivers
in a wind of her own design.
Then, as if betrayed,
she pumps her webs of green
gause against the pavement.

When I edge closer, my shadow
blacks the light. She freezes,
propped on her long-tailed
wings like a broken kite.

When I ease away, she shudders,
weighted with eggs, forcing
a filament of luminous seeds
from her body. What does she say,
bristling her primitive wings
that are painted with ancient eyes
she uses to startle offenders?

PORTRAIT

My Great Aunt Gertrude
in her black parquet heels,
her lips taut as a clothesline,
the feed sack apron pinned
across her chest,
used to clamp my feet into shoes
so ugly
that my ankles would try
to hunker down into
my socks just to hide.
The white collar of her navy dresses
clamped close around her neck.
She'd pay you fifty cents
to sit in a chair and not wiggle.

Susan Jones

MISS AMY

Outside, in your black coat
you gather green sheaves of lettuce
from a garden grown wild.

Rhinestone combs curve above the nape
of your neck. When you come inside
you ask,"Are you my people?"

You count off five sisters, shaking,
each knuckle swollen with rings,
and then whisper
to the tinted ovals on your bureau.
You cannot remember your husband
but you hum the old tunes
your father tremored behind the lattice.

We watch the pine trees settle into dusk;
their needles twitch in whiskered pattern.
Then you set my place at table, a silver spoon.
For supper there is ice-cream in china cups.

And now you tell me that fifty years ago
your young sister, the one with the Irish
temperament, began to convulse so badly
that she begged you to sit on her legs
to hold them down.

Susan Jones

VISITING

My grandmother, with her hooked nose
and waist-length breasts, told me
that trouble comes in threes
and that a wild bird, trapped
in your house meant a death in the family.
I believed her, my eyes wide
as horse chestnuts, when my three
great aunts died.

Back then, tuberculosis
meant nothing to me, except
for the fact that aunt who died of it
kept a large, stuffed barn-owl
on her hearth, whose eyes glinted
like cheap birthstones, whose odor
dusted the air. How
I wanted that bird for my own.

And why had we visited that old
woman who slept with her makeup on
who practiced for hours in front
of a mirror just how she would hold
her mouth so that death
could not take her unaware.

Another aunt lived with us,
a spinster, small and straight-backed
as a chair. Nobody wanted her to stay
and she knew it.

Grandmother, I used to watch
you soak your feet in salt water.
You said that I would grow
to be large-boned like you.
When I played "Bicycle Built
for Two" on the piano you clapped
your hands and hooted. I never
stayed long, impatient to go.
I wanted you to know
that I could live without you.

Susan Jones

THE OYSTER EATER

He'd sit on this porch
all day, tossing shells,
smelling the salt air, remembering the sun's
end, the folding of nets,

dreaming of creaking
masts, and sea swells.
The oysters came fresh on Thursdays from the Gulf,
whole barrels packed in brine.

At dusk he'd watch
the sun, and watch the oysters
shrink from the lemon juice like finger leeches
that shrivel up when you salt them.

Working the garden,
I still find his shells,
grey, furrowed, that cut my palms abruptly;
and dream of sea swells

later, on this porch,
the dark folding around me,
as I watch the oyster sun shrink again,
and wash these wounds with salt.

David Robinson

A NIGHT AMONG THE OTHERS

In the old days it was too much
hearing the sound of his hammer
beating the horseshoes into shape,
then finally trudging home,
past the bare trees
with their wildly kicking limbs,
past the cows
grazing on the winter grass
already dead.

Tonight he takes the weatherman
for all he's worth
and leaves the curtains closed.

Beside his sleep, after rains
the mushrooms grow
from rotted logs, the water
from the brook flows
soft and cruel; he hears
the old clanging, as always,
the whisper of his hammer
beating a world into shape.

David Robinson

THE BARREL

Dismantling an old barrel,
a big rain-catcher filled with limbs,
tin cans, and dirt, we work,
unwinding the hoops, placing the slats
in the bed of the pickup.

You prefer muteness when you work,
singing backwards all day
the wordless tune washing into you
like copper rain.

Through the plug-hole I see the creek,
lit copper from the leaf-filtered sun.
You hum metal, water, and wood
with no words, in the woods
dismantling an old barrel.

PASTORAL

The figurine grins
from the bookcase
at this vista of soiled carpet
a field sprouting with upturned cans,
the skillet caked with eggs,
and one amazing sweater
with Aztec designs
she left on the vinyl chair.

David Robinson

BLUES

Whenever you told your story
of how the bomb buckled the ship's deck
tearing your knees from their sockets
the women would listen hard.

Later, you'd limp to the piano
and honky tonk five wives into their graves.

Now the cancer's taken one leg
and whittled the other.

Great Uncle Ralph, you wanted
your women so fat their feet
would spill over their shoes
like overboiled oysters.

Now you watch them from your high porch,
your sticky palms
smelling like old pennies.

POEM ABOUT BIRDS

1.

Each morning the birds were muffled
by the sound of your breathing.

2.

Against this window grate
last night a solitary jay
had caught its wing
and battered itself to death.
This morning the smell of its blood
is bitter, sticky as semen.

3.

And each morning it is your voice
again over all these years,
the words light as the bones of a quail.

Robin Cameron

THE ROOM

1.
After fifty years the snow still
falls heavy
on the tender branches of my apple trees.
Sometimes the smaller limbs break under
the pressure. They fall into powder
or I find them withered and brown,
cross legged, and burn them,
cracked and peeling in the fireplace.

2.
In the old days I would hold
that woman close beneath wool.
Now I hear the voice of the sun,
Gliding untouched
Through the joints in the window panes
where she fills the bed across the room.

3.
Now the veins on these hands
still bulge from the plow.
Outside my grandson uncovers the grubs
burrowed deep beneath the thorny frost.
In summer he ties a fat green bug
to a string wrapped around his finger.

Chris Wheeler

HANDS

From behind corners of air
a hand makes for the handle.
The brakeman's missing finger points.

The strapped hands grip the chair
and the lights of the prison dim.
Birds fly through that flutter.

Wax mounds in the candle dish.
In that dark the hands of the old man
drop like wings of fishing gulls.

At the turn of knob
silence steams in—
birds whistle for days.

Chris Wheeler

AERIAL OBSERVER

During World War I, manned, gas-filled balloons were sent up in order to direct artillery fire. Especially vulnerable to attack by enemy planes, the life expectancy of these observers was 10 days.

When I worked on the bridges it was like this,
Even perfect vision ending only in haze.
Tugs and steamers labored beneath me
Carrying tiny crews that quickly faded from view,
Chugging up-river. Large sea-birds hovered
And dove for prey which I never saw.
Whenever they flew close, they would veer sharply,
Startled at finding men so near.
But there are no birds here.
The guns drive them off, and there is nothing
In No-Man's-Land that could be called a tree.
I hang alone.

Searching the smoke through my field-glasses,
I see them sometimes after the shells strike,
Torn soldiers, with always the look of shock.
When a strong crowd of wind elbows me along,
I feel the rope pull, and, for a second,
Believe it will break.

Kenneth Bivin

326 WEST ALLENS LANE

Sipping history from heirloom china,
She digs names out of the past
Like one sorting through old closets
who stops to try on ill-fitting clothes
A misperceived double floats
on canvas above her head.
Its knotted, transparent hands rest
on a stout-skirted lap.
The frame gives no authority.

Grandmother Haines hangs
on the opposite wall, elegant
in black lace, pearl fan
open in one open hand.
A little woman, I was
told, but here,-
Queen of the Persian rugs,
the broken-faced marionettes,
the Music Room.

Rachel Landrum

ASYLUM: TRYING TO FALL ASLEEP

The rain falls on roofs and sidewalks
like pin pricks on a paper cup.
A lie of order stalks the streets.
There's a crack in the plaster, here,
where night looks in and enters
without knocking. Why don't they find me
like momma used to when I'd
skin my knee and cry? The wind barely
pummels the pane at my
window. The walls close in on me-
I'm Alice, outgrowing my room.
In seconds I could be the White Queen
on a crimson sidewalk.
Again the child I was,
I defy the silence and sing.

Rachel Landrum.

WHAT HAPPENS: A DUBIOUS LECTURE

It is midnight. And, as you have just seen,
the glasses spring from chairs
to chase the mice across the floor.

This cannot be happening, you say, but
All of these things take place everynight:
The pictures break loose from their frames.
The eggs leap from their cartons
and fly to the theatre.

We are here because you are not.
Come here.
What do you think of the barbells?
Do you think they will move by themselves?

Terry Fugate

ODE TO THE "SOMBRERO"*

What they had to do to find
It went well past any denial
To plod along, traipsing light-years
With the waves, ferreting out what
Seems from our point to be a
Pinwheel of dust and gas
Collapsing on itself, obscured
Still further by cocoon nebulae
And the sobriquet, which has
Little or nothing in common with
The hat of a paysan who also
Dreams of traversing over great
Space, past the Rio Grande even
Into the pinwheel of lights
That is El Paso.

* Catalogued as Spiral Galaxy M104

David Ellison

ABANDONMENT AT THE QUARRY

Up and out of the stagnating marsh
We marched across the highway
Over toward what is now gourged
Ground in Indian Summer's end.
Flocks of starlings waver for
Insects; by this time November's sad
Wind blights butterflies.
All the while you're guiding my
Descent on a jagged gray stair,
The callibrations as smooth and
Lifeless as the tender mercies
Of your voice. Like the smegma on
Yesterday's pony, whose foreskin you
Runkled until he whinnied and cried,
It is the very crusts of our loves
You cannot deny.
They don't know what is coming next-
But you do. In instance how you found
The groundhog, almost ready to burrow
His way through stone out of desperation.
The garter snake caught permanently
From a quick chill and the geode
Near his frozen ribbons.-Cut open by you,
The sieve of colors reminds me of
Those allured before, caught by you,
Suddenly. Like those ring agates,
You have banded us to this place.

David Ellison

Movement so slow
the eye cannot match it.
Imagine a trembling in the clouds.

Rich Bailey

Chest heaving,
almost like a real bird,
the pigeon veers from the window pane
so as not to intrude.

Rich Bailey

Children on tiptoes
gaze over the rail
into an oversized world.

Amy Distaulo

Two slim bicycles
slide swiftly through
pre-dawn air.

David Breitkopf

ON A NEW YORK STREET

A blur of red and white
the empty popcorn box cartwheeled
like a gymnast gone berserk

Martha Sternberg

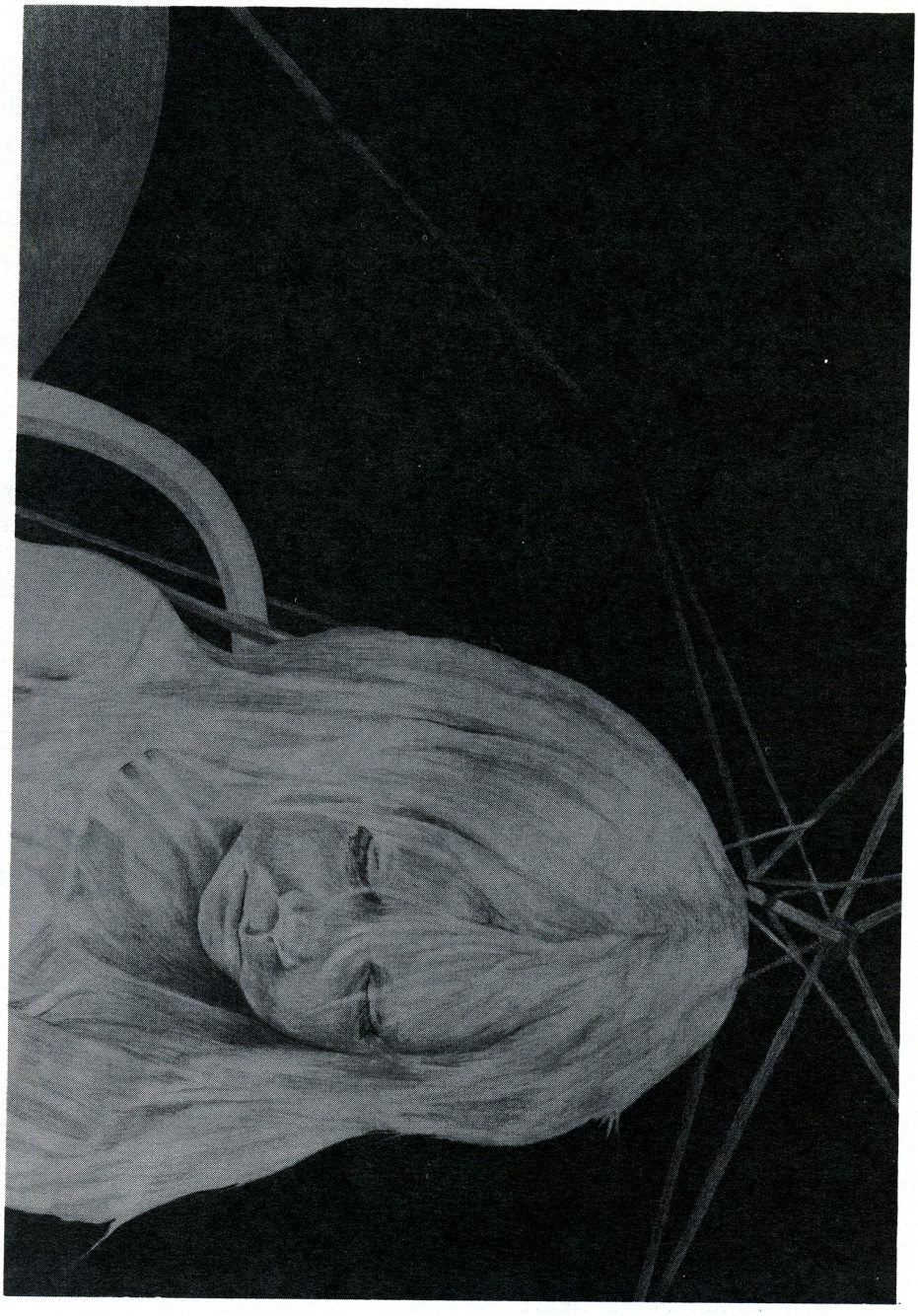
Dried up Begonia.
His wife dead. He pours
the burning coffee into the pot.

Ferris Kelly

Damp taps at my bone.
In the red river's ice sleeps
Weather of the heart..

Rachel Landrum

ART



Untitled **Gael Steele**

The Great Lords of Song Mai Howard Cannon *

* PRIZE WINNER

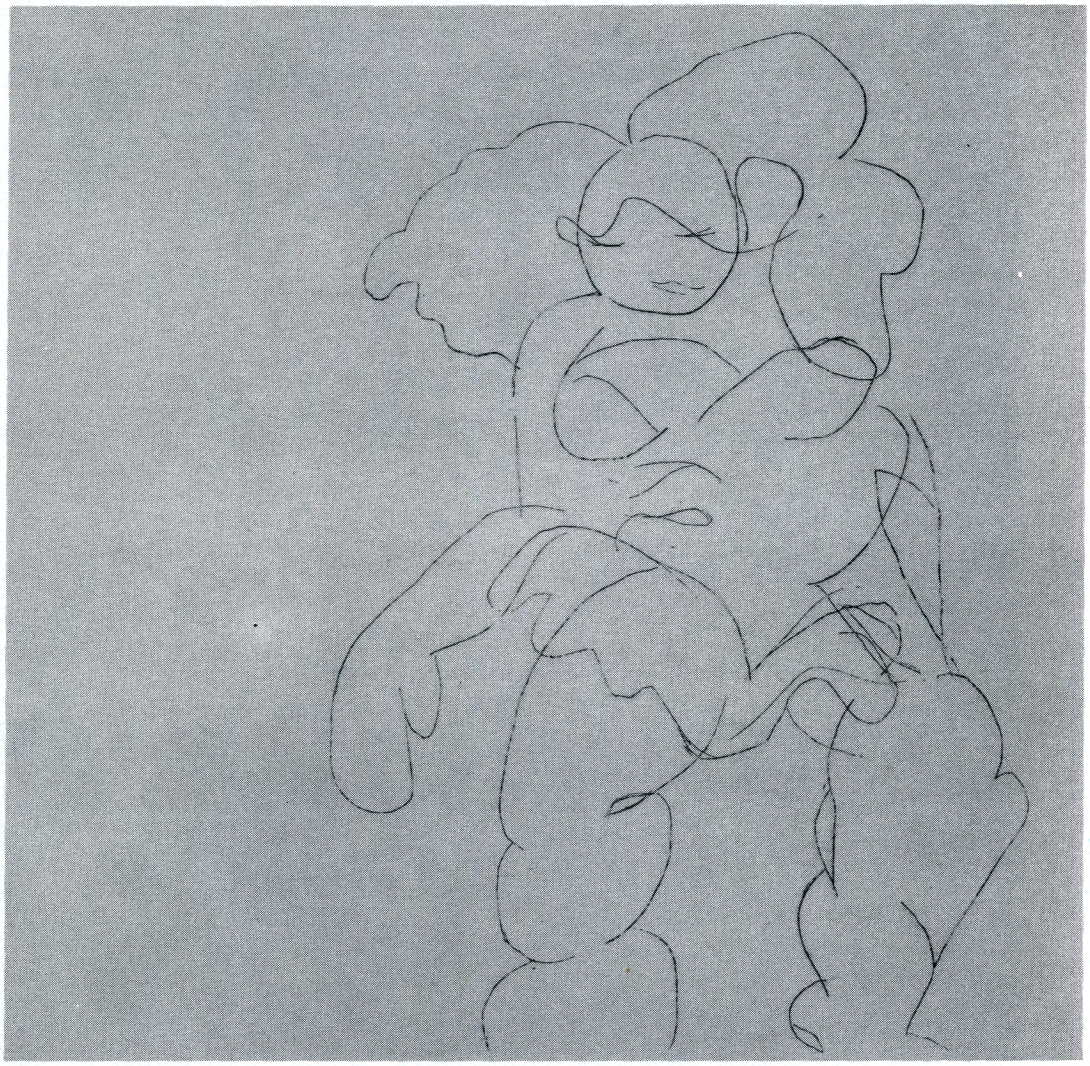
Paige Gael Steele

The Propagandist

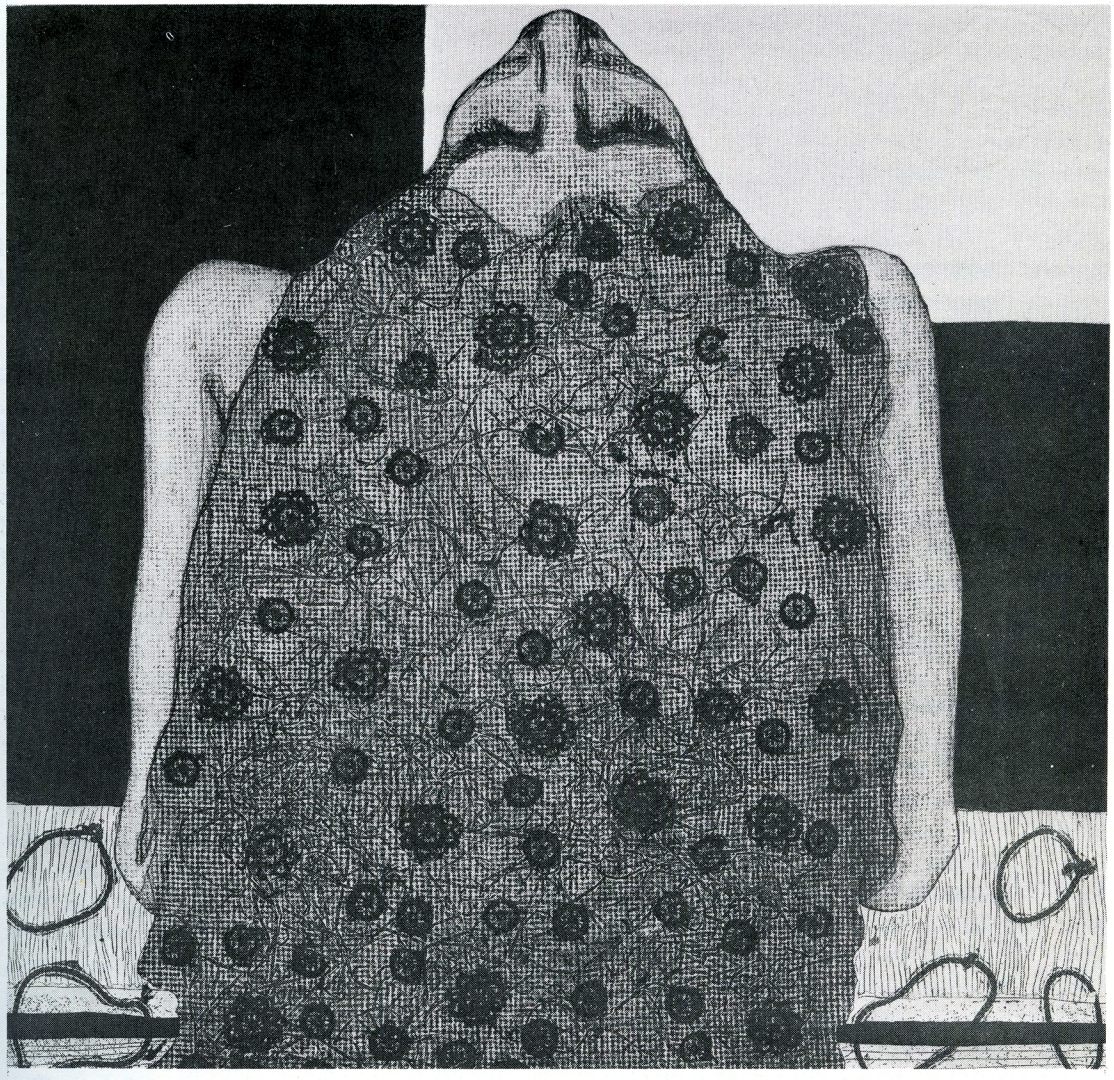
Robin Merritt

Tribute to Dolly — Avery Allender

Tusk Louis Wamp



"Lulu in her Tutu" Avery Allender



Midnight Sun — Gael Steele

TIME AND TIME AGAIN

Oh, sons of wo! decreed by adverse fates
Alive to pass through hell's eternal gates!
All, soon or late, are doomed that path to
tread;
More wretched you, twice numbered with the
dead!

Homer,
from "The Odyssey"

At approximately 4:30 on October 11th, 1979, Thomas Forsyth was travelling home. He was also ready to make a decision. Disgusted with his job, he was thinking of quitting.

Two years before, he was hired at Silver-Mariette Corporation as a systems analyst and head of the Data Processing Department. He was only twenty-three at the time, and that caused quite a commotion among the older programmers. They, naturally, felt that they should have been considered for the position above the younger, less-experienced Mr. Forsyth.

It was generally believed that Mr. Forsyth had risen so quickly in the company by devoting a rather large portion of his time to the attention of a certain Courtney Halifax, whose father, incidentally, was a Vice-President in the nebulous corporation. Now, some members of Forsyth's staff were growing very restless. The problem wasn't that Forsyth was incompetent or less knowledgeable than he should be for the money he was making, but that he was continually refusing to grant raises and recognition to employees in the department. Word had reached some of Forsyth's superiors, including Halifax, that there was a great deal of mismanagement in the Data Processing Department.

An efficiency expert was sent to Forsyth's office to "informally observe" the operations of the department, after which he was to make "suggestions" to the board of directors. As the small, middle-aged man sat in the paneled conference room, Forsyth realized that a bad word from this person could mean the end of his hopes for a Vice-President's office of his own. Most probably, he would be transferred to some obscure position in another department where he would shuffle papers and sign inter-office memos all day. Or perhaps, he thought to himself, they might move him to a foreign branch-office. Brazil, maybe? Hong-Kong?

Ascending the ramp onto the L.A. freeway, Forsyth had narrowed his options down to two. He could resign from Silver-Mariette while his record was still clean and "defect" to one of the company's many competitors, or he could try to swing the influential Mr. Halifax back to his side by marrying Courtney and spending his next few years with a spoiled, inflexible shrew.

At the thought of that particular fate, he groaned, tightened his grip on the steering wheel, and defiantly pressed the gas pedal to the floor. In seconds, his Ferrari shot past the out-going traffic. He weaved dangerously around the other cars and gleefully imagined their drivers' distress as he swerved towards their bumpers before jumping over the line and cutting them off. He passed a semi in the left lane and was coming up on an old, beat-up Galaxie. This particular driver decided to give the Ferrari a run for its money. The two cars were approaching a curve in the road when, out of the corner of his eye, Forsyth saw the Galaxie start to creep over the dotted line. At the curve he noticed that his speedometer read eighty-five. Suddenly, the Galaxie lost control and the rear-end fish-tailed into the side of Forsyth's car. Both cars spun furiously, raising clouds of black, acrid smoke from the melting tires. The Galaxie slammed into the guard-rail and instantly burst into flames. The Ferrari missed the rail and plunged down the embankment, still spinning, until it reached a telephone pole.

Blackness. Endless night. Dryness in his mouth. A numbness that seemed to grow deeper farther down his body. His thoughts swam over each other trying to grab hold in his consciousness. One finally made it. Thirst. Slowly he moved a thick tongue around his mouth, preparing to say "Water". What came out was a short, rasping cry, followed by a choking cough. The pain in his throat pulled him further from delirium and he opened his eyes.

Though the scene appeared blurry, he could recognize the inside of a hospital room. Figures in white glided past the door on his right. The coughing continued and he could feel his lungs start to constrict with every breath. Darkness once again began to take his sight but not until he saw the black, triangular mask float toward his face. He felt it being pressed over his nose and mouth and relaxed as something hissed gently in his left ear.

Suddenly, an explosion near his right side jerked him into awareness. Terrified, he reached toward his face and violently pulled off the mask. He opened his eyes and could not believe the scene before him. There was a huge field, barren except for some sparse grasses and hedges. And in the distance, a pine forest was barely visible through patches of black smoke that hung in the air like low, dense clouds. Spread over the field were men, some prone and immobile. Hundreds more, dressed in brown and khaki uniforms, frantically worked in groups of ten or twelve around what appeared to be mortars or light artillery weapons.

There was another explosion, this one on his left side, perhaps two-hundred feet away. He watched, riveted, as a great column of flame and smoke blasted one of the groups of men apart. Some were thrown into the air, their uniforms blazing, like lit matches tossed from an invisible hand. Seconds afterward, dirt and rubble rained down around him. He slowly looked toward the ground. He was puzzled when he saw that he was wearing heavy black boots on his feet. He also wore a tan uniform similar to the others. He looked at his hand and saw that it still held a large, bulky gas mask.

He looked up quickly and saw men in the distance, previously obscured by the smoke, running at full speed toward him. Some were yelling, "Gas! Gas!", while trying to cover their faces with pieces of yellow cloth. All around him, men were retreating to trenches to find masks and safety. The men from the field were closer and he could see the agony in their faces. Some dripped blood from their noses and mouths. One man ran toward him and pleaded, "Please, get into the trench." He looked at the man, not comprehending the meaning of his request. The man tried in French, "Va au bas de la trenchee!" Still getting no response, the man shook his head and ran with the others.

He could see the gas now. A yellowish-green smoke started to appear from the edge of the field. It floated no higher than eight feet above the ground and when it came to one of the many craters that marked the field, it sank into it and swirled around like water. The gas seemed to search among the bodies, trying to find the ones that still breathed. When it did the body would start jerking and coughing. Some wildly clawed the ground and buried their faces in the dirt, preferring suffocation to the horrible death caused by the green gas.

Finally, in fear he turned away from the scene and headed toward the long, sand-bagged trenches. As he climbed over the side he saw the same two men who, moments before, had been fighting and killing. Now, in the stillness of the battle caused by the advancing gas, they sat quietly, the only sound coming from the heavy breathing masks they wore. Quickly remembering his own mask, he fitted it over his head and crawled to an empty spot among the soldiers.

In what seemed like hours later, the thick, green gas started to float over the wall of the trench. It tumbled down the side and slowly began to fill up the long ditch. One man demonstrated to the others the thickness of the gas by letting his helmet fill with it and then putting it on his head. The gas ran like green molasses down his head and over his mask. Some muffled laughter at this charade prompted the man to stand up and take a bow. At this, there was more laughter. The comedian saw that everyone within sight was either laughing or applauding. Everyone but one man who sat and stared. His thoughts were elsewhere.

At night, he slept restlessly. There were booming sounds in the distance and his mask was uncomfortable. Shortly, however, his body seemed to float like the gas and he was dreaming. He dreamt that he was in a room of some sort, with dials and flashing lights on the walls. The room also had machines that looked like typewriters except that they were printing without anyone sitting in front of them pushing the keys. There was a clock on the wall with hands that were spinning backward. A bell rang four times and he was walking out of the room into a hallway. At the end of the hall he saw a man running toward him dressed in a brown army uniform. He

was screaming at him, "Please, get in!" He looked around himself and saw that there was no place to get into. Suddenly, a sliding door opened in the wall and the soldier was pushing him toward it. The door closed behind them and he saw that he was in a tiny room with four walls, the door being one of them. It was filled with coughing and choking men also dressed in uniforms. He felt weightless and dizzy in the room and he banged on the doors to get out.

And then he was out. He was driving very fast. The road before him was a black ribbon that wound around mountains of glass and brick. He passed other vehicles whose drivers wore large gas masks. He came upon one car that belched green smoke into the air. He started to choke from the exhaust but couldn't seem to pass him. Ahead of him was a sign that read, "Danger-85". He looked over at the other driver and saw that the man was laughing at him. There was blood running from his mouth, but he didn't seem to notice. He just kept on laughing at him. Suddenly he exploded inside his car and he swerved over into his own car. The steering wheel started to spin in his hand and he was spinning with it. Briefly, he saw the other car spinning into a wall. It burst into flames and he saw a skeleton in the drivers seat, laughing. His own car landed in a trench and people were applauding when he got out. He instinctively took a bow and when he straightened up he saw that he was inside a large white room. There was a bed with a group of men standing around it. They had just covered someone with a sheet and started to file, ceremoniously, out of the room. No one was left except for himself and the dead man. He slowly walked toward the bed and with a trembling hand, removed the white sheet completely from the body. Underneath lay a man dressed in a tan uniform. His body was riddled with bullet holes and dried blood made lines that ran from the man's nose and mouth to the back of his head. The symmetrical lines gave the effect of a mask on the man's face. He looked closer and tried to imagine the face without the dirt and blood and realized in terror that the face was his own.

He ran from the room screaming, and found himself in the same trench with men in gas masks standing around him laughing.Behind them were the men in white, wearing oxygen masks, and they, too, were laughing. He dove at the wall of the trench and clawed his way to the top.He started running toward the pine forest in the distance, someplace where he could hide. He had gone about fifty feet into the night when a huge spotlight was turned on him. He froze when he saw his shilouette on the ground before him. Someone was shouting, "Deserter!", and he turned toward the trenches from which he had just come. Blinded by the spotlight, he only heard the sharp clatter of the machine guns as the hundred man firing squad took their vengeance.

In Ypres, Belguim, St. Martins Cathredal still stands after the ravages of World War I. Behind the massive church lies a well kept field, under which lie mass graves of 15,000 men, women, and children. Adjacent to this field lies another, less cared-for cemetery which holds the remains of the Germans who died at Ypres. In the northwest corner is a simple marker, almost covered with wildflowers and weeds, which is inscribed:

Thomas Forsyth
British Expeditionary
Force
Executed: Oct. 11
1915

David Would Come

Jacques-Louis David ***Death of Marat***

As he settled back into the warm mineral water, he hoped that it would do some good. The incessant tingling and prickliness just under his skin seemed worse than it had been in weeks. His insomnia was back as was the inability of anything he seemed to eat to move comfortably through his digestive system. This business of revolutions. Raising the consciousness of the masses. New challenges to the establishment. Keeping the pressure, the tension, the truth always at the front of everyone's mind — a continual reminder to those in power, the rich, the King that you are always there and always will be. Always on the go with another speech, another article, another meeting. Maybe the warm salts would draw this away — if only for a while.

Soon he began to experience a peaceful, half-sleep — the first in a week. But the tension in his mind and the noises in the adjoining room — people coming and going making demands on his time, a woman's voice with a question or some plea — jarred him in and out of reality. He knew a great deal about justice, but little of irony. He had searched for the first, and while it had eluded him at every turn, finally he seemed to have received — found — it; as for the second, it now forcefully impinged upon him desiring entrance into his soul as a doubt or a void. Perhaps for the duration of a moment — if the Revolution could please be quiet — he would summons the courage to confront it.

To confront what would — should — be the greatest fulfillment of aspirations for most people. A successful medical practice in London, court physician to the brother of Louis XVI, the publication of numerous scientific and philosophical books and articles, and finally one of the brightest personalities of the National Convention. Even the setbacks — the rejection of the Academy of Science, the jail sentence, now the trial — he had used to his own best interests and had thwarted the attacks and ignorance of his detractors.

Enough for anyone, and he would have thought for himself. But there was a lacking at the center of life which he could not explain. All through the trial he had had disturbing moments when he felt like an outside observer — sometimes miles away. The feeling of irony was new alright, undeniable. But why? Maybe the skin becoming inflammed again was a manifestation of a more dangerous malady. Maybe it was just the people pulling at him from every direction — like the woman outside. Maybe the trial was too good to be true and he was simply having trouble accepting something really good for a change, something that seemed to have the prospect of lasting.

He finally had been vindicated, everyone in Paris would be talking about his victory, when the history of the Revolution was written his place would be secure — these were remarks his friends were making. Somehow it was all having a more positive effect on them than it was on him. He smiled, laughed, drank to their toasts, and shared their embraces, but somehow not with the same intensity. That "somehow" raised the doubt, created the void — it was the irony.

And he wondered if Robespierre, Montesquieu, or any of the others had felt the same — if they had, he realized why they had not spoken of it and why he would not. It would have to be wrong to hold in question all that he was now a leading part of — people were even dying — but still it was there.

He remembered a time now long ago in Neuchatel, near his hometown. He was a bright graduate full of every idealism — assured by his teachers that he would be able to help make changes. Not realizing that they were trying to live out in him what they were incapable of finding the courage to give themselves to — like parents trying to force a child upon a path which they could not walk. There was a young girl, too. Beautiful, effervescent, abounding with life, nature, humor. How much the voice in the next room reminded him of her.

They had long walks along the mountain sides, spent quiet afternoons beside old mill streams, watched children chasing fireflies in the early summer evening. There was a teaching job there in the Fall, a chance for a small village practice with the nearest doctor miles away — and her — his all for the asking. They had shared the highest moment of intimacy early in August on the grass of a low meadow with only the mountain and the moon ever to know. But he had known that this was the happiest he had ever been — no talk of changes or revolutions — and a kind of commitment was made in their hearts.

But then the classmate had come, an older man he had idolized, and there was endless talk into the night of Paris being ablaze with a new spirit. It was the center of the world, and there was a pleading for men of highest courage and character, men of destiny, forgers of a new age. He must come — to do otherwise was immoral, inhumane — no price was too great to pay. And remember what they had said at the university. He must go!

Never had his young life known a tearing ripping apart — an estrangement — like this. And the only way he could make the break with her was through the finality of cruelty and blame. With her crying face buried in his lap, she begged for the conventional, the jobs, the meadow. But the fires of Paris — the Revolution — burned in his mind. At least he would tell himself that again and again, and he spurned her with a desultory comment about her political shallowness and human insensitivity. Her last words to him had been something about what difference politics made and had she not been able to love. He had tried to forget but the woman's voice and the irony were bringing it all back.

Could it be that he had given himself to the task of the Revolution with greater emotion than anyone else in order to purge that emotion of a greater truth — her truth? Could it be that it had taken him only a short while to understand that while the Revolution might be right for Paris — France — the World — that it was not right for him? Had the Academy not rejected him, his entrance into revolution as revenge might might never have happened. Every cause needs a martyr — was he only too glad to allow himself to fulfill that role, especially since it prohibited any real comparison of his work to that of Newton? "Poor Marat" they had said, but the work of a lifetime — the science, the medicine — was seldom mentioned again. Had the newspaper really been for the people, or was it an act of his own self-aggrandizement? Why was the revolutionary tribunal's ruling in his favor of such little meaning to him? They called him "the symbol — the symbol of the whole victorious Montagnard movement," but perhaps symbols have meaning only for someone else.

A knock at the door. It must be time. Those Jacobins would not want to be kept waiting.

"Jean-Paul. We must go. I'm sorry. And there is a young woman here who pleads to see you for a moment. I have told her you have no time, but she insists. She claims to be from near your home."

Could this be true? The end of his imaginings? How he would love to talk with a young woman right now. "Yes. Let her come in. We have time."

When the young woman entered the room, he immediately sensed that something was wrong. But there was the smell of the grass of the low meadow — at least he thought there was — and all of his suspicions were denied. "Come in — come closer — what can I do to help you?" Was it the fact that he was still in his bath that intimidated her?

The woman faltered toward him — what was out of place? "My name is Charlotte Corday. I am — have been — once was involved with a Girondin group. I have become discontented."

Her speech seemed almost memorized.

"Go on," he said.

"There have been threats. Can you do something to give me protection? I have — I believe — perhaps there is some way . . . ."

Before he could respond. The animal-like wildness in the deep greenish blue of her eyes. The fear, but the determination. The reflection of sunlight on the blade of the knife. The lunge. "Wait!" But the "let me explain" was lost in the dull tearing ripping of the sharp steel. All the way to the hilt with every ounce of commitment to her cause that she could have — idealism. The deed was done. It took no skilled physician's expertise to know it had been done well.

In a few moments nothing would matter any more — the low meadow, the Revolution, Charlotte Corday. But suddenly he knew exactly what would happen. "No!" "No!" But it would happen — they would even think he would want it. David would come! With his brushes, canvases, and that accutely perceptive eye for the most realistic detail. David would come! And this moment would never end. How many times he had heard Jacques-Louis say that the Revolution needed a painting to epitomize itself. The tennis court oath had come close, but the Revolution needed a Pieta — Socrates with the hemlock — a martyr!

And that would be his destiny — he did not even care that much for David and now he would be David's masterpiece. He could see it now. A pained, but resolute look on his face. A revolutionary tract in his hand. His blood — plenty of his blood.

How many young men would the sight of his death lure from the countryside — from the conventional? How many loves would have to wait — forever? Of all the things that he would never want now! Not a martyr!

The irony of justice or the justice of irony. He had desired martrydom, but now when it was too late, it was the last thing — a double entendre — he would desire. The irony or justice of last things.

David could never capture the smell of the grass in the low meadow which still lingered — at least in his mind. In the distance there was a taste of blood — a taste of blood mingled with the smell of grass. Always in the Revolution — a taste of blood in the distance. "No!" "No!" But David would come.

Steve Byrum

THEN THE ROADS CAME

An interview
By Bets Ramsey

from an unpublished manuscript:
Step-Around-the Mountain: Quilts of
Appalachia

A visit to Lem Ownby's house on Jake's Creek, near Elkmont, Tennessee, with Mayna Mackinnon

"How have you been, Mr. Ownby?"

"Pretty good, had a pretty good winter. You folks all right? And Jim, how's he doin'?" (Jim Avant is Mayna's father, and has been coming to the family's cabin up above the Ownbys' since the turn of the century.)

"He is very well. He plans to get up this summer. I am sure he will want to see you. This is my friend, Mrs. Ramsey."

"How do."

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Ownby."

"That's Scott Ownby over t'thar. His daddy's out thar tendin' the bees," he motioned to a bright-eyed, nine-year-old boy standing against the wall.

"How many bees do you have now?"

"A hunderd 'n sixty hives out thar. Forty of 'ems mine, his daddy 'n 'nother feller has the rest. I don't tend 'em myself no more. Cain't see so good. Them fellers tend 'em and I jes' look after 'em when they're not around."

Stacked bee boxes filled the yard surrounding the house. Two men in beekeeper's apparel and smoke guns moved among them.

"We enjoyed the honey we got last fall, Mr. Ownby."

"Lem has a lot a' folks coming to buy honey, don't you, Lem?" Scott spoke up.

There was a pause in the conversation. Mr. Ownby leaned forward slightly in his platform rocker to spit tobacco juice neatly into a can beside the fireplace.

"Mrs. Ramsey is writing a book about quilts. Do you have any old quilts, Mr. Ownby?"

"Naw, not any more. Used t'have, though. And kiverlids, too. My maw made all them things. Had to, y'know. Now she knew *how* to work! Sometimes cardin' and weavin' and spinnin' by lamplight 'til ten o'clock. She wove the cloth fer my pants, 'n kiverlids, 'n everythin' we had. Onct she wove me a pair o' galluses. All of it wore out, now."

"What do you sleep under, one of those modern electric blankets?" I asked.

"Naw, I sleep under goose hair," he motioned to the two beds, neatly made up, against the opposite wall of the living room, and we laughed at his little joke and the pleasure he took in it.

"What did you use for quilt filler in the old days?"

"We used wool. Raised our own sheep and used the wool. Used it t' spin and weave, too. My maw, Sarey Watson Ownby, wove all the cloth at home. She'd buy her cotton, chain, she called it, in a hank. Dyed it with walnut roots or maple bark, in a kittle. She'd bile the wash in that kittle, too, and battle it on a banch."

Mayna looked puzzled.

"I guess you'll have to tell her what that is, Mr. Ownby," I said.

"Wal, y' take a stick 'r a paddle, 'n when y' take the clothes out a' the wash kettle, y' beat 'em on a board 'r a banch (bench) t' git the dirt out. Turn 'em over 'n beat t' other side. Come out clean as can be."

"Did you make the soap?"

"We'd put a plank in the bottom a' th' ash hopper to catch th' ashes and the lye. It took hardwood to make good ashes. Sugar tree or ash, not much hickory 'round here. Made soap or a year or more an' put it in a trough t' keep it. Didn't have crocks t' keep it in."

"How long have you lived here?"

"Been right here eighty-two years. Come from up above, near the Avant cabin, when I 'us three. This was my daddy's place. Tom, his name was. Used to farm it. Raised corn, 'n apples, 'n taters."

At the end of the nineteenth century lumbering activity had stripped the mountain slopes and there were open fields and meadows. They have vanished with the forests' regrowth, but there is still a remnant of an apple orchard at Lem Ownby's place.

"How did your father sell his things?"

"Some other fellers took 'em off t' sell. Used t' have a sawmill up the creek. Couldn't get lumber during the second war, so I let it go down."

His wife is dead now, and he has no children, so he keeps house for himself. The place is simply furnished: a few chairs, the beds, a pierced-tin pie-safe, a clock and photograph of his parents on the mantel, and, on the wall, large, oval, framed pictures of his sister and two brothers. In the kitchen were a couple of cupboards, tables and chairs, and a fairly modern stove. The Smoky Mountain park rangers check on him periodically. Lem never felt the need of a telephone, but not long ago the rangers put one in, for their convenience, to save a drive up the mountain.

Scott's father called, and he slipped out the door. He came back and asked, "Whar's your bee-prizer, Lem?"

"Up thar, on th' f'ar board."

Scott looked all around the room. "Whar's that?"

' Up thar on the mantel. Don't you know what a f'ar board is?" and he laughed his gentle laugh.

Scott came back in the house as I was asking Lem if he knew any quilters.

"My mamaw makes quilts."

"What's her name?"

"Mamaw."

We laughed. He thought seriously awhile and finally pronounced, "Dolly Adams, Mrs. George Adams."

"Where does she live?"

"Caney Creek, near Pigeon Forge, same as me. She has a lot a' quilts around. They wrote her up in the paper. Lem had his story in the paper, too, didn't you Lem?"

"That's right," he nodded, matter-of-factly, "the *News Sentinel.*"

"Do you have a copy of it around? I would like to see it," I said.

"Nope, I don't have it."

"You don't need one, do you, Lem?" Scott chimed in.

"Nope, I alriddy know about myself," and everyone had a good laugh.

"I seen thar was a b'ar in th' apple orchard," Scott said, changing the subject.

"He made a bed out thar when th' apples was in season," Lem explained.

Mayna said, "We had one near our place the other night. I guess with the camp ground closed they aren't finding as much food to eat."

"I 'member th' ole man who use t' live next t' th' Avant place, Ole Man Andy Conner. He had a cow, use t' come up t' the door to feed, milked her thar, too. Ole Man Andy Conner use t' say, 'Other folks ain't 's smart 's me, they have t' go out t' the barn in the snow t' feed thair cows.' Don't guess he ever did have a barn fer that ole cow. Right up next t' Jim Avant's place, it was."

He rocked and thought a while. His smooth, rosy skin gave little hint of his age. "I 'member the first shoes my daddy every bought me. Brogans, they was, with brass toes to keep from wearin' out. Too big fer me, but we had to git 'em that way 'n grow into 'em. My daddy use t' make all our shoes, and them's the fust ones ever I bought."

"More folks comin', Lem." Scott saw a pickup truck drive in the yard. "Lem has a lot a' company."

"You're about to run out of chairs, Mr. Ownby, with so many visitors," Mayna said.

"Don't matter. I'll jes' let 'em set on thair thumbs 'n thair fists," and he chuckled.

A second cousin from Maryville came in with her husband. She had lived near the Avant

cabin as a child, in a house now gone, and recalled Jim Avant's mother. We told her we had come looking for quilts, as we stood up to leave.

"I've made some, myself," she said. "Dutch Girl, Flower Garden, Around the World. I just love the Dutch Girl quilt, it's so different. I sure do remember your grandmother. She was a fine lady. An artist, too, always painting when she'd come here from Nashville. We lived up by her place for a couple a' years. We'd just had to move out of Maggie's Valley when the Park took over and we was looking for a place to settle. It sure was hard for Papa to find a place he wanted to be. Took him about five years to settle somewhere. It brings back old times, to meet you."

"We had better be going. Goodbye, Mr. Ownby. Daddy will be up to see you before long. Goodbye, Scott."

"Goodbye."

"Goodbye."

A Fable for The Modern Era

The young girl ran, deer-like, in the driving rain pelting the barren moor. Her long brown hair stuck to her face; her gown plastered to her supple body. "Dear God!" she thought, "If Reginald finds me, I am finished!" How was she to know that the mysterious dark young man whom she had met in Paris only a week before would return unexpectedly, catching her in the midst of an indescretion with his uncle? "Blast!" She ran breathlessly along the brink of the precipice, the rushing stream echoing hollowly in the night. "Good Evening, Abigail".She checked herself. "Reginald! What are you doing here?"

"Dearest, I've come to do you bodily harm."

"You fiend, don't you realise that you'll never escape retribution?"

"That," he replied,"is a cross that I alone will have to bear." With a warm smile, he stabbed her thirty-seven times, broke her arm in six places, and removed her teeth. As she fell two hundred feet to the torrent below, she thought, "Dear-I'm such an unhappy person. Luckily, fate will deliver his just deserts." Reginald strolled away into the darkness. Two weeks later, as he rode in a cab through Soho, a band of masked men with Klashnikov rifles blocked his path. They pulled him roughly from the passenger seat, & threw him across the hood of the cab. "Are you the individual who did violence to Abigail Smithins?,"asked their sinister leader. "Y-y-yes..." stammered Reginald in reply. "Thank you," said the masked man, and gave him a seat in the House of Lords, two weeks in Sardinia, and a flat in Sussex.

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Julio's Big Break

Julio Cortez was a handsome young man. His olive skin glistened in the heat of the Los Angeles afternoon. He was also a funny young man. When the mailman came to the door of his flat in the barrio where he lived with his odious mother and five whorish sisters, he would say,"Julio, I see they're reposessing your Cheby" and Julio would reply "Bite it." "Oh ho!" the mailman would reply, "Not only does he look like Freddie Prinze, he acts like him too! Hoo hah!" Julio would then slam the door and box his mother's ears until it was time to go steal Anglo hubcaps. Every night, very late, he would stare at himself in the smeared mirror and muse,"Freddie Prinze, indeed!" "Julio!" his mama would cry,"shut up and sleep!" "Mama Bicho!" he would sassily retort, hitting her with the phonebook. His sisters would laugh. One night, after passing the day rolling Brownies, Julio snapped. "This cannot go on!" he roared as he put on his best yellow double knit leisure suit. "I must know!" And he strolled through the soft summer evening to the Comedy Store."I want a number. " The old burlesque veteran eyed him warily."You've got thirty seconds," he said."Go!" Julio strolled to the center of the stage."Excuuse me!" he said,"Wogga Wogga." The crowd hooted. A fat man, sweating at a back table sneered.

Julio left, dejected. "I know I've got the touch," he thought-"I'll show them." He returned home to the tenement in the barrio. "Well?" screeched his mother. "Bug off" he replied, hitting her with a hubcap from an Eldorado. His sisters giggled at his robust humour and returned to counting their five dollar bills. Every night for the next six months, he stood before the smeared mirror. "Excuuse me," he would say. "Oh yeahhh." For hours he would strut. "I don't get no respect." Finally, he was ready. Step by step, Julio made his way back to The Comedy Store. He had the magic. The passersby felt it and turned to watch him pass. "That spic's got pizzazz," the Anglos murmured. The scarred burlesque veteran felt it when Julio asked for a number. "Do it, kid" he hissed. The house fell silent as he took the mike. "Anybody here ever go to high school?" he mugged. "Reality, wow, what a concept." The waves of applause drew the breath from his body. He had arrived, just like Freddy Prinze. He strolled confidently home through the barrio that moonlit night. He could do no wrong. Suddenly, he heard them, but it was too late as a pack of the barrio's famous wild dogs were upon him. His screams rent the evening as they ate his face off. Grandmamma Arazon came to the window to see what was going on. "Ah, to be young" she said, sipped some tequila and went back to bed. Now that's funny.

"And I think it's just never going to be alright with her again," added Mrs. Fuston as she locked her apartment door behind them. Mrs. Stagmeyer, her trusted confidant, hovered near her in silent assent.

"Still, it's a shame," she replied in a slightly hushed voice, moving her eyes up and down the hallway to check for eavesdroppers.

"A shame for who?" queried Mrs. Fuston as they started down the stairs. Struggling with increasing breathlessness as they traveled down the stairs, she continued her lecture. "That child that never got a chance to live is the one that deserves your sympathy, not Terry. She got what she deserved, and not half enough at that. The problem with kids today is that they all want to dance, but no one wants to pay the fiddler. If she were my child, you can bet that I wouldn't have let her take the easy way out. And Mrs. O'shea a Catholic, at that. It just goes to show that America's losing all its morals. Legalized murder, that's all it is. Things keep on this way and pretty soon Americans will be no better than those Europeans. But at least I can take comfort knowing that the Good Lord won't let her forget what's been done."

The two old women reached the bottom of the stairs and stood there for a moment to catch there breath as they looked out front-door windows into the street beyond.

"My, it looks like a lovely day. I'm so glad after all the rain we've had."

Mrs. Fuston nodded her agreement, "It should be a good day for shopping today."

The two women moved through the large, battered mahogany doors into the noisy street. If they had glanced up they might have noticed a young girl watching them through the sheer curtain of a window in the building they had just come from. Terry was sitting in the front room of her apartment watching the city life while the morning sunlight rambled around the faded Victorian architecture of the room. Her smooth skin seemed almost to glow in the soft light as she watched the pantomime movements outside, where the sound did not reach her, and the life was not her own. The silence in the room caressed her thoughts, and her motionless body was swallowed by the stillness. She watched the two women as they walked across the street, close together, with eyes darting nervously in all directions against the traffic, and waited on the opposite corner for the bus, heads wagging in constant conversation. After a few minutes the bus arrived, blocking her view, and when it pulled away, she saw her mother standing in their place, as if some marvelous sleight of hand had just been achieved.

Her mother looked older to her now than ever before. She noticed all the extra pounds that had been put on over the years, transforming her once slight and feminine frame into the squarish, matronly one of today. She noticed the pale, rubbery skin of her arms, exposed by the light summer dress she wore, the pronounced lines in her face, and, most of all, the greying hair that was once a beautiful chestnut brown. Mrs. O'shea hurried across the street carrying a large bag of groceries. Terry realized that her mother's movements were different from her own. They lacked any sense of vanity or self-consciousness. They were purposeful, direct, without the superficial grace that was almost automatic in her own.

A loud, ugly buzz strangled the silence of the apartment. But Terry remained motionless, as if, more than any other object in the room, her body had absorbed the quiet, the way steel absorbs the cold on a winter day. She remained motionless well into a second blast on the buzzer, finally stirring from her seat to walk across the room and press the front door release. A few moments later her mother came through the door, huffing a little from her climb up the stairs with the package.

"Where were you? I forgot my key. I thought you'd never answer the buzzer. I was beginning to think you weren't home."

"I was in the bathroom."

They both descended on the kitchen and began putting away the groceries. They spoke to each other without looking up from what they were doing.

"What have you been doing all morning?"

"Nothing."

"Well, it seems like you could have found something to do. I'm sure you must have had some homework or something you could have worked on. Just because I allowed you to stay home from school doesn't mean that you're on vacation today. You'll have to make up anything you miss you know."

"Don't worry, I'm doing fine in school, and one day isn't going to make any difference."

Mrs. O'shea closed the cabinet and looked at her daughter. Terry's soft strawberry hair spilled loosely over her white shoulders as she moved around the room, her figure smooth and agile. But today her movements were lethargic, and her mother knew why, they both did. The strain of the last month had told on both of them. She wished that her husband were still alive . . but then again, his temper probably would have made things worse. Even if it would have been nice for her to have him to lean on, his old-fashioned ideas might never have allowed the operation. She remembered when Terry had come to her and told her, how she had offered herself up for marriage, trembling, as though it were some sort of sacrificial rite, requiring all the courage her young soul could muster. No, she knew she had made the right decision. Any other would have been absurd. The whole affair seemed so freakish, a nightmare, like children playing war with real guns. The boy was no older than her own daughter. There was no prospect of a decent home for the child. It was a trade-off: the life of the unborn child for that of two developing ones.

The thing that worried her most now was the effect it might have on Terry. She had gone along with the idea from the start with a sense of relief. But although she tried her best to hide it, she had clearly been affected by it, felt guilty. The problem from the start was that she was old enough to know, but not to understand, and guilt was the hardest thing to understand, to cope with, even for an adult. How much more for a child of sixteen?

"Would you like me to fix dinner tonight before you go to work Mom?" Terry had finished putting away the groceries and had turned awkwardly to face her mother, like someone under inspection.

"You can if you like," smiled her mother, "but you don't have to. It's probably a good idea for you to keep busy for awhile anyway. I was planning on having fried chicken tonight."

There was a heavy silence in which Mrs. O'shea wiped the counter, simply for lack of anything to say or do, and finally added, "Let's go into the living room. All that shopping today made me tired. I need to sit down somewhere."

The change to the living room didn't seem to make the situation anymore relaxed, as she had hoped, but she started in immediately to say what she felt was necessary.

"Honey, I didn't mean to snap at you before, when I asked what you'd been doing this morning. It's just that I do think you shouldn't lie around and mope right now. You've been through a hard experience, and you're handling it very well so far, but it's important that you pick up your life again and move on. I know you feel guilty about what has happened, but it's past now. I want you to know that it doesn't affect the way I feel about you. I love you, and I always will. I forgive you, but the important thing is that you forgive yourself."

"But does God forgive me?"

Mrs. O'shea was not really surprised by this remark, although they were not what could be generally described as a religious family. At Terry's young age, with the emotional strain she had been through, and having no real father to turn to, it was natural for her to turn for stern judgement to the fatherly image of religion.

"I'm sure He does, Terry."

"I hadn't thought about God much in a long time. But lately I have alot. Sometimes I think maybe the whole thing happened to punish me for being bad, for not acting the way I should. Like what happened in my life was a test, and I failed it."

"That's nonsense dear. Everyone is tested every day of their lives, and fails in one way or another. No one is perfect, and I don't think God expects people to pay for all their mistakes. We can't go back and relive the past. The important thing is to learn by our mistakes and not make them again in the future. The past can never be changed, but the future can, and I think that's what God wants us to do."

Terry was sitting on the couch, rigid, and Mrs. O'shea did the only thing more that she knew to comfort her, she reached out and hugged her body close to her. Terry responded desperately, but a little stiffly, as if she was not quite sure she deserved this affection.

"Well, remember honey, you have an appointment at the doctor's soon, so you'd better get ready," she said as they disengaged themselves.

"Well, hello Terry. Come on in. How's my pretty young woman today?"

"Fine Doctor Rader," she replied timidly. Doctor Rader had been her family doctor ever

since she could remember, treating her for measles and chicken-pox, and all of the various diseases that are common to any child. She knew Doctor Rader well, or at least as well as anyone ever gets to know their doctor. But now it was different for her. This was no childhood disease. She had always been completely at ease with him before, but now she was embarrased to have to see him. She had wanted her mother to send her to another doctor, but she insisted on Dr. Rader. She wondered what he thought of her, if he disapproved, thought she was a terrible child. She was convinced he would never indicate how he felt, even if he thought what she was doing was odious. His big, dark figure, with its soft brown eyes, faced her now with a smile.

"Well good, good. Why don't you get undressed and get up on the examination table so I can check you out and be sure."

She quickly peeled off her clothes, and swung up onto the table, which was made of shiny steel, and had a soft cushion on the top. The metal was cold against her legs where they touched at the edges the metal itself. As he began to prod and inspect her body with expert motions, she gazed around the room at the various instruments that looked like something out of a science-fiction movie, and she remembered how they use to frighten her as a child. All the big lights, and complicated dials, all porcelain white or silvery steel, they looked so cold and ambivelant, as though they could be used to hurt as easily as to help. She remembered something she had read once which scared her, how the Nazi doctors had tortured people during World War II, using them for medical experiments. She wondered if Dr. Rader was German. She tried to imagine him with a Nazi uniform on, hat pulled low over his eyes, big black boots on. Perhaps he fled after the war and has been hiding out here ever since, being a nice, amiable doctor so that no one would ever suspect his past. Would his good have made up for his terrible past? Would he not be quilty anymore of the things he'd done?

"Well, you seem to be in fine shape. There's no need for you to worry about anything, you're as healthy as ever. You can put your clothes back on now."

Dr. Rader watched as she left, a girl he had seen grow from child to young woman. He was glad he had been able to help her. It was so modern and civilized, a simple operation, and it saved everyone so much misery, so much needless sorrow over one mistake. As if nothing had ever happened.

It was such a beautiful day that Terry decided to walk. She knew her mother probably wouldn't approve, but she wanted to walk through the park and there was still plenty of daylight left. The large amount of people out on the streets in such beautiful weather made her feel delightfully insignificant. She imagined lives and problems to go with some of the faces she saw as she walked. For awhile she lost herself in this game, and it made her feel good.

When she reached the park it was crowded, and she bought some peanuts from a vendor to feed the pigeons with. The sun was bright and the trees just beginning to bloom, with the dogwoods already like snow on the landscape. She settled into one of the benches that had an elderly man sitting there in hat and coat, despite the warmth. She began tossing the nuts to a few pigeons pecking about the ground near her, and they gobbled them up hungrily. More and more began to arrive and fight with each other over the food, until soon there was a blanket of the dirty grey and white feathered bodies covering the ground around her, eyeing her with erratic movements as they huddled around her feet. The mass of movement and sound made her think of the people on the streets, fighting in their own way for their own food, their own rewards, too little for their insatiable appetites.

She realized her own was no different. It wasn't their life out their and hers inside, somehow it was all the same. And she had done what was natural for her. She was not a part of yesterdays ideals, she was a member of modern society, and shared their fate. Science had been developed by them to gain dominion over nature, and their own mistakes. She was a part of this future, and could do no other than to partake of it. It was they, as well as she, that controlled her life. Like any other form of life, it must also be moving according to some pattern, a drive and direction.

She looked down at the ground and saw that the birds had left. She was out of nuts, and they had moved to someone further away who had offered them bread. But there was one left, one bird that continued to eye her and peck the ground. It did not join the others in their new meal. Instead, it spread its wings and rose into space, rising above the trees and becoming lost to sight in the glare of the sun. Perhaps it never left the park, but its going seemed graceful and free.

PRE-TEXT: DECONSTRUCTION, WALLACE STEVENS AND THE VIRTUE OF CIRCULAR ARGUMENT

The poem of the mind in the act of finding
What will suffice. It has not always had
To find: the scene was set; it repeated what
Was in the script.
Then the theatre was changed
To something else. Its past was a souvenir.

It has to be living, to learn the speech of the place.
It has to face the men of the time and to meet
The women of the time. It has to think about war
And it has to find what will suffice. It has
To construct a new stage. It has to be on that stage
And, like an insatiable actor, slowly and
With meditation, speak words that in the ear,
In the delicatest ear of the mind, repeat,
Exactly, that which it wants to hear, at the sound
Of which, an invisible audience listens,
Not to the play, but to itself . . .

— From "Of Modern Poetry"

In the light of recent studies by Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jacques Derrida, and others which suggest that criticism cannot simply "double" the text, that is, reproduce its meaning in the mirror of critical commentary, what should we perceive as the task for criticism? For these critics, traditional criticism "closes" the text; they search for a way to open the text's possibilities. But if criticism cannot faithfully reproduce the literary text in a re-enactment of its meaning, what can it produce? If critical commentary is always, as Derrida says, a "supplement," and addition to the text, what is the proper form and function of this supplement? And where does it end? Can it end? And what better text to use as a means for examining these questions than the poems of Wallace Stevens which, according to a recent study by J. Hillis Miller, themselves raise these very questions? Such, then, is the project of this paper — an analysis of the nature of texts and of criticism using Stevens' poems as points of departure and return.

I.
"But in a fiction, in a dream of passion . . ."

A pre-text is that which comes before the text. It is, then, both temporally and logically prior to all that follows. Like Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* (or, if one prefers a materialist example, Hobbes' "matter in motion"), it is the original premise or assumption upon which all subsequent or consequent arguments are built. Moreover, a pre-text is necessary, for it provides both a beginning and a foundation for any logical edifice. but a pretext is also a subterfuge, a veil that one draws over the real state of affairs and one's true motives. In this sense, the original premise is revealed to be based on something other than itself, on another link in the chain of a strategy of arugument. The foundation shifts; the ground is discovered to be swamp.

Another way of saying this is that all human arguments are ultimately circular. So Nietzsche, is his revelation of the linguistic assumption underlying Descartes' foundation of the thinking subject, demonstrates that "when it is thought there must be something 'that thinks' (it) is simply a formulation of our grammatical custom that adds a doer to every deed." Even this "irreducable" truth is, then, a kind of pretext, or, to borrow Stevens' phrase, a "supreme fiction," and we are compelled to ask, with Nietzsche, "What are man's truths after all?" and to conclude with him, "They are man's *irrefutable* errors."

In the realm of language, this principle of circularity is best illustrated in the dictionary, which, in what is perhaps the most thoroughly deceptive and beautifully intricate circular argument of all, always refers us from one word to another in an endless circuit and never to the

thing itself (of which words are assumed to be the signs). Our journey through this circle of language is motivated by a desire much like that sensation of Stevens' speaker in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," which "requires that I should name you flatly, waste no word,/ Check your evasions, hold you to yourself," but, like him, we find that:

> Even so when I think of you as strong or tired,
> Bent over work, anxious, content, alone,
> You remain the more than natural figure. You
> Become the soft-footed phantom, the irrational
> Distortion, however fragrant, however dear.

This desire to name reality leads Saint John in "Saint John and the Back-Ache" to name all the things that reality is not: it is not force, not mind, not the sea's green, not autumn's "yellow shift," not woman. These are only metaphors that

> help us face the dumbfoundering abyss
> Between us and the object, external cause,
> The little ignorance that is everything,
> The possible nest in the invisible tree.

The presence of reality is defered —" It may be, may be. It is possible." We may now speak of it only through illustrations which

> are neither angels, no,
> Nor brilliant blows thereof, ti-rill-a-roo.

The words by which we seek to fix meaning are thus revealed to be a series of metamorphic and metonymic substitutions. I return to Nietzsche:

> What therefore is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms: in short a sum of human relations which became poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding; truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they *are* illusions; worn-out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the senses; coins which have their obverse effeced and now are no longer of account as coins but merely as metal.

Following a similar line of argument and employing a similar metaphor of linguistic "effacement" comparable to the wearing down of a coin, Jacques Derrida characterizes language (especially the language of metaphysics) as a "white mythology," in which "the metaphor is no longer noticed (as such), and it is taken for the proper (denotative) meaning."

The importance of one's chosen pre-texts is deomonstrated in Steven's poem "Six Significant Landscapes." Here it is shown that the beginning point of any argument will determine its conclusions:

> Rationalists, wearing square hats,
> Think, in square rooms,
> Looking at the floor,
> Looking at the ceiling.
> They confine themselves
> To right-angled triangles.

But if one chooses different pre-texts, the results are altered accordingly.

> If they tried rhomboids,
> Cones, waving lines, ellipses —
> As, for example, the ellipse of the half-moon —
> Rationalists would wear sombreros.

Further, if any given pre-text is examined closely, it may be shown to depend upon something other than itself, as in "Bouquet of Roses." The speaker in this poem sets out to describe the bouquet. At first the flowers are

> too much as they are
> To be anything else in the sunlight of the room,

Too much as they are to be changed by metaphor. The objective reality seems solid and beyond the transforming and distorting power of language. But by the third stanza, this clear

direct perception is qualified (as things are so often in Stevens' poetry), and the speaker is brought to realize

> And yet this effect is a consequence of the way
> We feel and, therefore, is not real, except
> In our sense of it.

This discovery undermines the beginning assumption and reveals what was at first "too actual'- to be "not real" at all.

A similar transformation occurs in section XXIX of "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," and in this case the metamorphosis is explicitly linguistic. The first two stanzas contrast "the land of the lemon trees" to the mariners' "land of the elm trees," and the third stanza continues this contrast in relation to language:

> They rolled their r's, there, in the land of citrons.
> In the land of big mariners, the words they spoke
> Were mere brown clods, mere catching weeds of talk.

Up to this point the two worlds are distinct but equally valid, but once the mariners have entered the land of lemon trees, that land is redescribed by them as a version of their own land in their own terms. They say, "We are back once more in the land of the elm trees,//But folded over, turned around." What is important to note here is that the mariners' statment is not simply the translation of a solid and unchanging reality into the new language but "an alteration/ Of words *that was a change of nature.*" It is a change in reality, not merely in terminology, for "The countrymen were changed and each constant thing." In linguistic terms the signifier is more powerful, more real, than the signified. Indeed, the signified as such disappears entirely or appears only as a paradox within the realm of the signifier, as a "constant thing" which changes. Here, as Derrida has said, "The signified always already functions as a signifier," and "This, strictly speaking, amounts to destroying the concept of 'sign' and its entire logic."

If, then, all our words are ultimately metaphors whose metaphoric nature has been forgotten, and all our pre-texts are, fundamentally, pretexts, on what basis can we proceed from the pre-text to the text, and what is to keep us from despairing of every saying anything at all? John Barth's character Todd Andrews, when faced with a similar question, considers "whether in the absence of absolutes, values less than absolute mightn't be regarded as in no way inferior and even be lived by." The significance of such an attitude lies in the fact that it recognizes the "deconstructive" nature of language itself, and of human knowledge based on language, but it also rises to the challenge that this involves. Thus, Paul de Man describes what has come to be known as "deconstruction," not as an aesthetics of nihilism and the total destruction of meaning, but as an aesthestics of revaluation and reconstruction:

> deconstruction seems to end in a reassertion of the active performative function of language and it rehabilitates persuasion as the final outcome of the deconstruction of figural speech. This would allow for the reassuring conviction that it is legitimate to do just about anything with words, as long as we know that a rigorous mind, fully aware of the misleading power of tropes, pulls the strings.

The question, then, is not one of meaning versus non-meaning, but one of affirmation versus denial. Derrida has stated the alternatives in this way:

> There are thus two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of play. The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign, and which lives the necessity of interpretation as an exile. The other, which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play.

To affirm the play of language is to become like the Roman actor who represents for Roland Barthes the writer's acknowledgement of the artificial nature of literature. "The whole of Literature can declare *Larvatus prodeo.* As I walk forward, I point out my mask."

II.
"The play's the thing . . ."

As part of our pre-text, then, let us *assume*, that is, take up and put on, our masks. What are the masks that play out their roles in any paper? How shall the actor speak? A recent critic has addressed this question of the critical voice by contrasting the points of view of Northrop Frye and Roland Barthes.

> Frye says that criticism is independent of literature because it has a voice and literature is dumb; Barthes says that literature is a void. Frye assumes that literature has a voice but cannot speak; Barthes asserts that literature is to be given a voice or rather voices. Who would give it the voices? Everyone, or at least there is no way a priori by which one can say that only this voice or these voices are appropriate.

To say that the critic gives literature a voice is to realize that, despite traditional claims to a pure *explication de texte*, the critic always adds something of himself to the work of criticism. It is not merely that the critic *chooses* to use his voice; if he is to to the work of criticism, he *necessarily* does so.

Hans-Georg Gadamer has explored this principle and its implications in a systematic and detailed way in his *Philosophical Hermeunitics*. In this work, what we are calling the voice of criticism is called "prejudice," and Gadamer affirms prejudice, much as Derrida affirms play. It is necessary to quote at length to show how Gadamer effects this transformation.

> It is not so much our judgements as it is our prejudices that constitute our being. This is a provocative formulation, for I am using it to restore to its rightful place a positive concept of prejudice that was driven out of our linguistic usage by the French and the English Enlightenment. It can be shown that the concept of prejudice did not originally have the meaning we have attached to it. Prejudices are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth. In fact, the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the intitial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are the biases of our openness to the world.

Later, Gadamer shows how this directedness of prejudice affects the work of interpretation, for "No assertion is possible that cannot be understood as an answer to a question, and asssertions can *only* be understood in this way." As the title of one of Stevens' poems asserts, "Questions are Remarks." When a child asks, "Mother, what is that,"

> His question is complete because it contains
> His utmost statement. It is his own array,
> His own pageant and procession and display,
>
> As far as nothingness permits . . .

Thus, the pageant or play is in the question itself, is in the directedness or prejudice of the critic's voice.

Another of Stevens' poems which shows the importance of "directed" questioning and which explores where some of these directions may lead is "The Ultimate Poem is Abstract." This poem begins with a question about the day — it "writhes with what?" The lecturer answers in his own way, but the question is more important than his answer:

> The particular question — here
> The particular answer to the particular question
> Is not in point — the question is in point.

The pre-texts underlying the question's directedness are what need to be investigated, or, one might say, deconstructed. And these questions lead to further questions. "One goes on asking questions. That, then, is one/ Of the categories." These questions point the speaker in the direction of a new view of reality:

> It is not so blue as we thought. To be blue,
> There must be no questions. It is an intellect
> Of windings round and dodges to and fro,
>
> Writhings in wrong obliques and distances,
> Not an intellect in which we are fleet: present
> Everywhere in space at once, cloud-pole
>
> Of communication

Reality becomes like the act of questioning itself, not a matter of fixed answers in a completed center of meaning but an endless, decentered circuit in which the questioner is "Helplessly at

the edge."

If such a view of questioning directs us to the conclusion that the critic is also helplessly removed from the object of his investigation by his questioning, it may yet point toward a new affirmation of the directive power of the critical voice itself. As in "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven,"

> To have evaded clouds and men leaves him
> A naked being with a naked will
>
> And everything to make.

From this perspective, the critic assumes a role similar to that traditionally ascribed to the poet himself, that of "maker" and thus becomes much more than a passive spectator of literary play. Direction implies power, and criticism is a transformative act (in all senses of the word). As Stevens' jar placed in Tennessee "made the slovenly wilderness/ Surround that hill" and "took dominion everywhere," so a critical paper placed in Tennessee, or anywhere else, will exert its own force. The speaker in "Prologues to What is Possible" reaches a similar conclusion about his own creative transformation of the world around him. The first section of this poem is a record of the speaker's quest for final meaning expressed through the imagery of a voyage. Thh "ease of mind" which the speaker feels is comparable to the ease within language, what Gadamer calls

"the essential self-forgetfulness that belongs to language." Moreover, "The boat was built of stones that had lost their weight and being no longer heavy/ Had left in them only a brillance, of unaccustomed origin"; that is, the true nature of the stones has been forgotten, just as the metaphors of langauge have been effaced by constant use and wear. The object of this quest is the fullness of meaning at a point of "central arrival," but at this point the speaker and the poem reach a limit at which the quest deconstructs itself.

In the second section of the poem, the speaker is no longer a part of the metaphor, belonging within it, for the "central arrival" has been revealed to be "beyond his recognizing." He now feels fear in reaction to the metaphor which has brought him to the limit of the anthropomorphic extensions of his language, "removed from any shore, from any man or woman." But the poem does not end with the speaker's realization that "likeness of himself extended/ Only a little way and not beyond." The speaker goes on to redefine meaning as a "hypothesis," and to acknowledge that he adds himself to reality as a "puissant flick,"

> A flick which added to what was real and its vocabulary,
> The way some first thing coming into Northern trees
> Adds to them the whole vocabulary of the South,
> The way the earliest single light in the evening sky,
> in spring,
> Creates a fresh universe out of nothingness by adding
> itself,
> The way a look or a touch reveals its unexpected
> magnitudes.

The failure to arrive at one central meaning is no longer a reason for fear but the basis for a creative transformation of the world, just as the failure to discover one static meaning in a literary work may be the pre-text for new beginnings which present the text to us as an open stage for the play of possibility. Thus, the act of criticism is creative, and the critic's pretexts have virtue, *virtus*, potency, power.

III.

". . . Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king."
(*Hamlet*, Act III, sc. ii)

Following Heidegger's injunction that we listen to langauge, let us listen for a moment to the language of criticism. As Derrida has said, "Metaphor is never innocent. It orients research and fixes results," and the ways in which we talk about the critical activity profoundly affect our conception of its role in literary play. One of the primary tenents of much modern criticism is the secondary nature of the critic's role. The critic is supposed to be subserviant and *submissive*

to the text which constitutes the primary authority for all critical activity. Moreover, it is the critic's task to be *faithful* to this primary text, and if he is thus faithful, his interpretation will be *legitimate*. The sexual metaphor in such language is perhaps all too explicit, but the curious aspect of each of these terms lies in the sexual role which it implies for the text and critic, respectively: the text is the authoritative, dominant, masculine force, and the critic is subserviant, submissive, feminine. Our ways of speaking about criticism reveal an assumed value system based upon a paternalistic sort of textual authority and dominance.

In recent years, a force has been at work within criticism which would liberate the critic from this textual dominance. Largely under the influence of contemporary French critics (whose work might be called "decadent" or even "perverse" from the paternalistic standpoint), a new system of values is being shaped which reverses the roles of the masculine text and the feminine critic. Through the action of what Derrida calls "solliciting" (from the Latin *sollicitare*, to shake, to arouse, to seduce), the critical foundations are threatened by a sort of role-reversal similar to that which occurs in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. Barthes, for instance, speaks of the text as a weaving of various codes. "The text," he asserts in *S/Z*,

> while it is being produced is like a piece of Valenciennes lace created under the lacemaker's fingers . . . The grouping of codes, as they enter into the work, into the movement of the reading, constitute a braid (text, fabric, braid: the same thing); each thread, each code, is a voice; these braided — or braiding — voices form the writing.

Elsewhere, Barthes defines text as *tissue*, and proposes "the theory of the text as an hyphology (hyphos is the tissue and the spider's web." Although hardly a recent thinker, but one whose influence on contemporary criticism is exceedingly strong, Nietzsche, speaking about the search meaning, declares:

> But perhaps this is the most powerful magic of life: it is covered by a veil interwoven with gold, a veil of beautiful possibilities, sparkling with promise, resistance, bashfullness, mockery, pity, and seduction. Yes, life is a woman.

Thus, meaning, and by implication textual meaning as well, becomes feminine. It no longer constitutes a paternalistic authority but a feminine wile.

The interaction of masculine and feminine forces in the work of art and its interpretation may be illustrated by Stevens' "The Old Woman and the Statue." Here the male artist devises a statue which dominates the world around it. The masculine power of the sculpted horses is described in terms of both their actual appearance and their ordering effect on the surrounding scene.

> So much the sculptor had forseen: autumn,
> The sky above the plaza widening
> Before the horses, clouds of bronze imposed
> On clouds of gold, and green engulfing bronze,
> The marble leaping the storms of light.
> So much had had devised: white forelegs taut
> To the muscles' very tip for the vivid plunge,
> The heads held high and gathered in a ring
> At the center of the mass, the haunches low,
> Contorted, staggering from the thrust against
> The earth as the bodies rose on feathery wings,
> Clumped carvings, curcular, like blunted fans,
> Arranged for phantasy to form an edge
> Of crisping light along the statue's rim.
> More than his muddy hand was in the manes,
> More than his mind in the wings. The rotten leaves
> Swirled round them in immense autumnal sounds.

But the sculptor could not forsee the woman of the "bitter mind" who views his statue. On her the power of the work of art is lost, for "The golden clouds that turned to bronze, the sounds/ Descending, did not touch her eye and left/ Her ear unmoved." Rather than being dominated by the statue's power like the rest of the scene around, she transforms both the form and the effect

of the work in her sense of it.

> The mass of stone collapsed to marble hulk,
> Stood stiffly, as if the black of what she thought
> Conflicting with the moving colors there
> Changed them, at last, to its triumphant hue,
> Triumphant as that always upward wind
> Blowing among the trees its meaningless sound.
> The space above the trees might still be bright
> Yet the light fell falsely on the marble skulls,
> Manes matted of marble across the air, the light
> Fell falsely on the matchless skeletons,
> A change so felt, a fear in her so known,
> Now felt, now known as this. The clouds of bronze
> Slowly submerging in flatness disappeared.

Now the mind of the woman becomes the dominant force, and it, rather than the statue, orders the world, for hers is "a mind in a night/ That was whatever the mind might make of it." If the woman were not present, the statue might retain its power; "There the horses would rise again,/ Yet hardly to be seen." For the work of art, to be seen is to be transformed, and the viewer or interpreter of the work takes on an active, creative role.

The role reversal within the language of literary criticism has a similar implication that the critic will now assume a more dominant role. But the situation is hardly simple. Let us follow Nietzsche's thought a little further.

> . . . supposing truth is woman — what then? Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists, have been very inexpert about women? That the gruesome seriousness, the clumsy obtrusiveness with which they have usually approached truth so far have been awkward and very improper methods for winning a woman's heart? What is certain is that she has not allowed herself to be won.

Thus the critic is left with the problem of how to come to "know" (in both the literal and the metaphoric sense) the feminine text. As in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction,"

> the bride
> Is never naked. A fictive covering
> Weaves always glistening from the heart and mind.

The problem of knowledge brings with it two related dangers for the newly liberated critic. First, she may wholly dismiss the importance of the text in the critical relationship and forget that both masculine and feminine forces are necessary to a fruitful marriage. Second, in doing so, she may also feel that she is entitled to talk about whatever she wishes, however unrelated to the concerns of the text, and in this way use her new found power for self-aggrandizing purposes which will only reestablish a new kind of authority or dominance.

In order to avoid these extremes, it is imperative that criticism now try to gain a new appreciation of the relation between text and critic as a productive union of creative forces on a more equal basis than has usually been granted to it. Such a relationship will not set up a new rule of authority, for it allows for individual variations. (Some texts are more submissive by nature and so are some critics.) It will also open the way for the introduction into the process of critical (re-)production of ideas and techniques from what are usually called "unrelated" and "un-literary" fields (such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, etc.), which are, in reality, not unrelated at all, but are more aptly characterized as fraternal or sororial disciplines. As Edward Said has observed,

> The series being replaced is the set of relationships linked together by fimilial analogy: father and son, the image, the process of genesis, a story. In their place stands: the brother, discontinuous concepts, paragenesis, construction. The first of these series is dynastic, bound to sources and origins, mimetic. The relationships holding in the second series are complementary and adjacency; instead of a source we have the intentional beginning, instead of a story a construction.

Thus, we welcome new voices into the critical play of discourse.

Freed from textual dominance, then, the liberated critic may now enter into a more equal and creative union with the text, and the act of criticism will be empowered to engender its own

offspring. What Shelly wrote of poetry in his *Defense* will now be equally true of criticism — "it is as the first acorn, which contains all oaks potentially." The virtue, or power, of the pre-text, of the beginning assumption or taking up of the mask, now becomes the seed of what is possible, and "possible" derives from the same Latin root as "potent." Thus, the pre-text becomes a prologue to (pro-)creative play — a "prologue to what is possible."

Marcia Toumayan

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Editor's Note—Twenty-Five dollars is awarded for the best student work in each category. The awards in the art and photography categories were chosen by a member of the UTC Art faculty; all other awards were chosen by the editorial staff of the Sequoya Review. Two prizes were awarded in poetry: one from the section edited by Dr. Jackson, and one from general submissions. The essay in this issue, by Marcia Toumayan, is part of a work in progress for the Honors Committee, due to lack of space we were not able to include her footnotes—however, they are available upon request.

COVER DESIGN: **Kim Pack**